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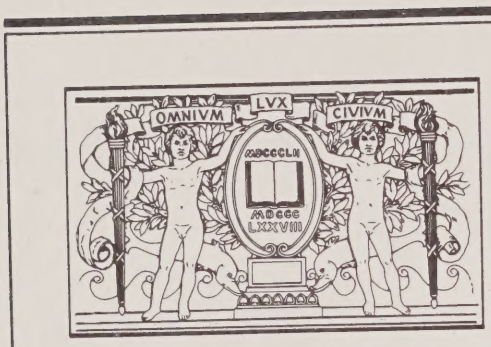

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Summary Profile

of

South Boston, 1985

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Boston Redevelopment Authority

Research Dept.

February 1987

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South Boston Profile Summary

Data for this profile have been drawn from the 1985 Household Survey, which offers the most up-to-date figures on Boston and its neighborhoods.

Race and Ethnic Origin

South Boston houses a remarkably homogeneous population of approximately 31,498, of which 97 percent lives in households (as opposed to group quarters). * Ninety-seven percent of South Boston residents in 1985 were white, in sharp contrast to the city generally (66% white).

South Boston residents were far more likely than city residents overall to have been born in the state (90% vs. 55%, respectively). One quarter of city residents were born in other states (compared to 3% in the neighborhood), reflecting the attractiveness of the city thanks to its economic, educational and cultural strengths.

Age

The median age of neighborhood residents in 1985 was 37, eight years older than the citywide average. The higher age is due to the large proportion of older adults living in South Boston: 41 percent of the population was 45 years old or more, compared to only 26 percent of the Boston population.

Marital Status and Family Composition

The proportions of never-married and married individuals in South Boston were similar in 1985 (39% vs. 41%). As the share of married individuals in South Boston increased between 1980 and 1985 it decreased in the city from 42 percent to 37 percent. The trend toward larger numbers of single people first noticed at the citywide level in 1980 is also apparent in South Boston in 1985.

Just under one-third of households in the district were composed of individuals living alone; another 11 percent were made up of two or more unrelated people sharing dwelling units. The citywide averages were 32 percent and 22 percent, respectively. Another third of South Boston households were headed by single adults with dependent children, versus only 11 percent of city households.

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* This population estimate was derived from a count of occupied dwellings in the district in 1985 and from the household size reported in the 1985 Household Survey for South Boston.

Educational Attainment

In 1985, the high school completion rate of South Boston residents was much closer to the overall city rate than it had been in 1980. By 1985 70 percent of adults 25 years or over in South Boston had completed high school, compared to 77 percent of adults throughout the city. The share of college-educated residents in the district almost doubled from 7 percent in 1980 to 13 percent in 1985, although it still lags behind the citywide average of 28 percent.

Labor Force Participation and Unemployment

Labor force participation in South Boston rose from 59 percent in 1980 to 62 percent in 1985, and unemployment dropped from 7 percent to 4 percent. Men experienced somewhat higher unemployment than women (5% versus 3%) although they participated in the work-force in larger numbers (74% versus 51%). The 1985 city unemployment rate for men was higher in 1985 than the neighborhood rate (7% and 5%, respectively, although participation rates were the same). Women participated in the labor force at a higher rate citywide than women in the district (59% versus 51%), but their unemployment exceeded the neighborhood level (5% compared to 3%).

Occupation

The occupational mix in the South Boston economy in 1985 differed markedly from the citywide averages. One-fifth of employed residents worked in professional, managerial or technical jobs, nearly one-third held clerical/secretarial jobs, 15 percent were employed as operatives and 10 percent were craftsmen. * Throughout Boston, the overall averages for these occupations were 36 percent, 20 percent, 10 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Similar shares of neighborhood and city residents worked in sales (5% and 7%, respectively), labor (4% versus 2%) and service occupations (16% versus 18%).

Industry

Shifts occurred in the industries of employment of South Boston residents between 1980 and 1985. Construction, trade, finance/insurance/real estate, and services all employed larger shares of employed residents in 1985 than previously. The proportion of the neighborhood employed in construction more than doubled in those five years (to 7%) although only 3 percent of city workers were in construction. Declines were registered in the proportions of people working in manufacturing (from 18% to 13%),

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* "Clerical" includes word processors and data entry staff.

transportation/public utilities/communications (from 9% to 7%) and in government (from 29% to 20%). Differences from the city mix of industries are noted for construction, services (24% in the district compared to 36% citywide), and government (20% in South Boston versus 11% in the city overall).

Place of Work

Roughly similar proportions of South Boston residents worked in South Boston in 1980 and 1985 (25% and 29%, respectively) but the share of workers employed downtown almost doubled in those five years from 19 percent to 34 percent. At the same time, however, the proportion of neighborhood residents working elsewhere in the city halved (from 46% in 1980 to 23% in 1985). An average of only 28 percent of city residents were employed downtown in 1985, roughly the same as five years earlier.

Income

In 1980, the median household income in South Boston was only 80 percent of the city average, giving the district the third lowest median. Over the next five years the neighborhood lost ground.

Larger shares of households living in South Boston/East Boston/Charlestown * earned under $10,000 per year than citywide (40% versus 28%) Consequently, smaller proportions of households in this combined area fell into any of the higher income brackets. The median household income in this combined area was only $13,800 in 1985, compared to $19,250 for the city as a whole. South Boston/East Boston/ Charlestown ranked eighth out of the nine neighborhood groups in terms of median household income, according to the Household Survey.

Fifty-nine percent of households in South Boston/East Boston/Charlestown drew on wages and salaries as their main source of income in 1985. * The other major source of income was social security (21%). Unemployment, AFDC, welfare and other benefits accounted for 7 percent of household income in the area, as did pensions and annuities. Among households citywide, 70 percent reported wages and salaries as their main source of income. Somewhat lower proportions of households in Boston overall, therefore,

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* The sixteen neighborhoods of Boston were grouped according to geography and general similarity for the determination of incomes because the sample for this question in the 1985 Household Survey was quite small.

relied on social security (13%) or pensions (3%) for income, although 7 percent did draw government transfer payments.

Housing

The condition of the housing stock in the neighborhood is below average for the city, and the typical household in South Boston lacks the resources to substantially improve its home or to afford the higher housing costs that commercial development nearby would bring.

South Boston's housing stock is typical of most Boston neighborhoods. In 1985, three out of every four dwellings were rental units, half of all units were in two-to-four-unit buildings, 28 percent were in structures containing seven or more units, 2 percent were in five-to-six-unit buildings and 19 percent were in single-family homes. The number of persons per household remained at 2.3 from 1980 to 1985, just below the 2.4 average for the city in both years. As was the case in most neighborhoods, South Boston had a low net vacancy rate (3% versus 4% citywide) in 1985. In 1980, however, the net vacancy rate in the neighborhood and in the city was 8 percent.

The condition of South Boston's housing stock is below average for Boston. According to respondents to the 1985 Household Survey, 9 percent of all housing units in South Boston needed a great deal of exterior rehabilitation, while 45 percent needed some work. The averages for Boston were 7 and 23 percent, respectively. Similarly, 9 percent of South Boston's households rated the interior condition of their units as "poor", and 25 percent designated a "fair" interior condition. Citywide averages were 6 and 21 percent, respectively. But, as noted earlier, households in the neighborhood have relatively low resources with which to improve the condition oftheir housing.

As of 1985, South Boston households were paying relatively low rents. Gross rent, the dollar amount spent by a household for apartment rent, including utilities, was around $320 in South Boston compared to $400 citywide. Yet one-quarter of household income in South Boston went to gross rental payments, which was about the same as the city average.

DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HOUSING DATA
FOR SOUTH BOSTON AND CITY OF BOSTON, 1980 AND 1985

	SOUTH BOSTON		BOSTON	
	1985	1980	1985	1980
RACE/ETHNICITY				
Population (1985 est.)	31,498	30,396	609,000	562,994
White	97 %	99 %	66 %	70 %
Black	--	--	23 %	22 %
Asian	--	--	4 %	3 %
Hispanic/other	3 %	1 %	7 %	6 %
AGE				
0 - 9 years	9 %	11 %	11 %	11 %
10 - 19 years	11 %	16 %	14 %	16 %
20 - 24 years	8 %	10 %	15 %	14 %
25 - 34 years	17 %	14 %	22 %	19 %
35 - 44 years	11 %	9 %	12 %	9 %
45 - 64 years	24 %	24 %	15 %	18 %
65 years or more	17 %	17 %	11 %	13 %
Median age	37.0	34.2	28.8	29.9
ANCESTRY/PLACE OF BIRTH				
Born in Mass.	91 %	86 %	55 %	60 %
Born in U.S.	3 %	5 %	25 %	21 %
Born in Europe	4 %	7 %	6 %	7 %
Born elsewhere	2 %	1 %	15 %	12 %
Speak English at home	92 %	96	80 %	83 %
Speak Italian at home	1 %	--	2 %	3 %
Speak Spanish at home	--	--	6 %	6 %
Speak Chinese at home	--	--	2 %	2 %
Speak another language	6 %	4 %	8 %	7 %
FAMILY COMPOSITION				
Single	39 %	33 %	45 %	39 %
Married	41 %	36 %	37 %	42 %
Separated/Divorced	9 %	16 %	10 %	10 %
Widowed	11 %	15 %	7 %	9 %
Live alone	31 %	43 %	32 %	48 %
Live w/ unrelated person	11 %	#	22 %	#
Married couple, no others w/ children	14 % 20 %	10 % 20 %	10 % 18 %	13 % 19 %
Single person w/ children w/children & others	23 % 1 %	23 % 4 %	11 % 2 %	12 % 3 %
Single person w/ relatives	1 %	--	4 %	4 %

Persons classified as living alone in 1980 might have been living with an unrelated person.

	SOUTH BOSTON		BOSTON	
	1985	1980	1985	1980
EDUCATION				
High school diploma	70 %	62 %	77 %	68 %
College graduate	13 %	7 %	28 %	20 %
LABOR FORCE				
Labor force participation	62 %	59 %	66 %	62 %
Men	74 %	NA	73 %	NA
Women	51 %	NA	59 %	NA
Unemployment rate	4 %	7 %	6 %	6 %
Men	5 %	NA	7 %	NA
Women	3 %	NA	5 %	NA
OCCUPATION				
Professional, technical, managerial	20 %	9 %	36 %	30 %
Sales	5 %	1 %	7 %	3 %
Clerical, secretarial	30 %	28 %	20 %	26 %
Crafts, mechanical	10 %	18 %	8 %	8 %
Operatives	15 %	9 %	10 %	10 %
Laborers	4 %	6 %	2 %	3 %
Service Workers	16 %	29 %	18 %	19 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
INDUSTRY				
Construction	7 %	3 %	3 %	2 %
Manufacturing	13 %	18 %	14 %	14 %
Transportation, communications, public utilities	7 %	9 %	5 %	6 %
Trade	16 %	12 %	16 %	16 %
Finance, insurance, real estate	9 %	5 %	8 %	7 %
Services	24 %	20 %	36 %	31 %
Government	20 %	29 %	11 %	20 %
Self-employment	5 %	4 %	7 %	5 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
PLACE OF WORK				
Home neighborhood	29 %	25 %	17 %	19 %
Downtown	34 %	19 %	28 %	20 %
Elsewhere in Boston	23 %	46 %	25 %	34 %
Elsewhere in SMSA	10 %	10 %	28 %	24 %
Outside SMSA	4 %	--	3 %	3 %
Total	100%	100 %	100%	100%
MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION				
Private vehicle	44 %	36 %	50 %	47 %
MBTA	33 %	44 %	36 %	35 %
Walked only	20 %	21 %	14 %	15 %
Other	3 %	--	3 %	3 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100 %

	SOUTH BOSTON		BOSTON	
	1985	1980	1985	1980
INCOME *				
Median household income	$13,800	$10,131	$19,250	$12,530
Largest sources of income				
Wages, salaries	59 %	61 %	70 %	71 %
Social security	21 %	17 %	13 %	13 %
Unemployment, AFDC, welfare	7 %	13 %	7 %	7 %
HOUSING				
Occupied units (1985 est.)	13,226	12,626	233,969	218,457
Median contract rent	$220	$128	$350	$192
Median gross rent	$320	$184	$400	$254
Mean housing value *	$112,943	$39,324	$111,760	$50,131
Percent appreciation, 1980-1985	187.2 %		122.9 %	
Net vacancy rate	3.0 %	8.0 %	4.0 %	8.0 %
Gross vacancy rate	7.5 %	10.3 %	6.1 %	9.5 %
Persons per household	2.32	2.33	2.44	2.40
	1984/85	1974	1984/85	1974
Housing condition				
Good (A and B)	90 %	60 %	92 %	71 %
Fair (C)	8 %	31 %	5 %	20 %
Poor (D and E)	2 %	10 %	3 %	9 %

* Mean housing values reported in 1985 constant dollars.

* Income data for South Boston in 1985 include East Boston and Charlestown. 1980 income figures are for South Boston alone.

SOURCES: B.R.A. and N.D.E.A. Household Survey, conducted by the Center for Survey Research, 1985.
U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population.
B.R.A. Household Survey, conducted by the Center for Survey Research, 1980.
Summary Analysis of the NDEA Housing Condition Survey, with Comparisons with the 1974 B.R.A./Building Inspection Department Survey, November 1985.

Hafrey/PD&R/B.R.A.
24february1987

BUSINESS PATTERNS IN SOUTH BOSTON, NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND EMPLOYEES, BY TYPE OF BUSINESS, 1983

INDUSTRY CODE	TYPE OF BUSINESS	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
**	AGRICULTURE AND MINING		
0	Agriculture and Mining	8	55
** Subtotal **		8	55
**	CONSTRUCTION		
15	General Constractors	20	183
16	Heavy Construction	1	374
17	Special Trade Contractors	52	808
** Subtotal **		73	1365
**	MANUFACTURING		
20	Food and Kindred Products	17	1138
22	Textile Mill Products	8	327
23	Apparel and Other Textile	25	1622
24	Lumber and Wood	5	239
25	Furniture and Fixtures	3	11
26	Paper and Allied Products	8	175
27	Printing and Publishing	68	2302
28	Chemicals	4	229
29	Petroleum and Coal Products	1	2
30	Rubber and Plastic	3	23
31	Leather	3	115
32	Stone, Clay and Glass	1	2
33	Primary Metals	4	78
34	Fabricated Metals	13	529
35	Machinery Ex. Electronic	9	167
36	Electric and Electronic Equipment	8	1047
37	Transportation Equipment	2	21
38	Instruments	3	55
39	Miscellaneous Manufacturing	4	93
** Subtotal **		189	8175
**	TRANSPORTATION AND PUB. UTIL.		
41	Local Transit	5	44
42	Trucking and Warehousing	37	1229
44	Water Transportation	6	133
45	Transportation by Air	1	2
47	Transportaion Services	9	125
48	Communications	3	422
49	Electric, Gas, & Sanitary Service	1	2
** Subtotal **		62	1957
**	WHOLESALE AND RETAIL		
50	Wholesale Trade - Durable	88	1183
51	Wholesale Trade - Nondurable	120	2289

BUSINESS PATTERNS IN SOUTH BOSTON, NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS AND EMPLOYEES, BY TYPE OF BUSINESS, 1983

INDUSTRY CODE	TYPE OF BUSINESS	NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
52	Building Materials & Garden	6	40
53	General Merchandise Stores	6	71
54	Food Stores	35	651
55	Automotive Dealers & Service	11	46
56	Apparel & Accessory Stores	11	183
57	Furniture & Home Furnishings	5	24
58	Eating and Drinking Places	90	1953
59	Miscellaneous Retail	48	521
** Subtotal **		420	6961
** FINANCE, INS., REAL ESTATE			
60	Banking	9	279
61	Credit Agencies	7	70
62	Security, Commodity Brokers	4	773
63	Insurance Carriers	7	373
64	Insurance Agents, Brokers	14	526
65	Real Estate	33	448
66	Combined Real Estate-Insurance	1	2
67	Holding & Other Investment	9	103
** Subtotal **		84	2574
** SERVICES			
72	Personal Services	27	284
73	Business Services	50	997
75	Auto Repair	30	443
76	Miscellaneous Repair	7	54
78	Motion Pictures	3	7
79	Amusement & Recreation	10	297
80	Health Services	22	806
81	Legal Services	7	88
82	Educational Services	6	94
83	Social Services	15	231
84	Museums	1	2
86	Membership Organizations	25	350
89	Miscellaneous Services	28	625
** Subtotal **		231	4278
** UNCLASSIFIABLE ESTABLISHMENTS			
99	Unclassifiable	54	276
** Subtotal **		54	276
*** Total ***		1121	25641